DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 104 026 EA 006 972

AUTHOR Hall, Mary
TITLE Competency-Based Education in Oregon: An Overview.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (60th, Washington, D. C., March 31-April 4, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Accreditation (Institutions); Credits; Curriculum Design; Curriculum Development; Educational Planning; Educational Specifications; Elementary Secondary Education; Equivalency Tests; *Graduation Requirements; Higher Education; *Performance Based Education; *Performance Criteria; *Performance Specifications; State Legislation; State Licensing Boards; State Programs; *State Standards; Teacher Certification; Teacher Qualifications
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon

ABSTRACT

During 1972-74, three separate but interrelated statewide policies were enacted providing the legal basis for moving Oregon public schools and the postsecondary institutions preparing educational personnel for these schools to a competency-based orientation. These three policy areas dealt with 1) changes in the minimum requirements for graduation from high school, 2) changes in the standards on which personnel preparation institutions are accredited and educational personnel are certified, and 3) changes in the minimum school standards used by the state to accredit elementary and secondary schools. A brief review of each of these policy areas is presented. (Author)

ED104026

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION IN OREGON:

AN OVERVIEW

By Mary Hall
Assistant Superintendent
Oregon State Department of Education
Salem, Oregon

Presented at
American Educational Research Association
National Meeting
March 30 - April 3, 1975

EA 006 972

Public involvement in the governance of education in Oregon is one of the state's most consistantly espoused and carefully guarded traditions. The charitable say that this tradition rests on the pioneer ethic when the forming of a local school was frequently the first step taken towards forming a township.

The less charitable attribute this attitude to the so-called "Oregon personality," which is often characterized by terms such as "opinionated, aggressive, pig-headed" and is demonstrated by a former Governor's much-publicized challenge to out-of-staters to "come and visit, but don't stay." The punch line of this story is that Oregonians voted to remove the pension for this self-same Governor when he promoted a school finance plan which they felt was designed to eliminate that most sacred of all traditions, "local control."

Regardless of whichever picture appeals to you most, the norms of the state are an important beginning point in understanding both the reasons for and the content of some extremely important educational policies which have been adopted since 1972. I'm particularly qualified to explain these norms to you, since as a fourth-generation Oregonian, I've had an intimate acquaintance with the "Oregon Way."

In looking at why the State of Oregon turned to policies relating to competency-based education, why these were adopted in such a relatively short period of time and why they appear to permeate statewide decisions in several key areas, three aspects of the "Oregon Way" seemed most relevant.

<u>First, Oregonians tend to judge an individual by what he or she can do, rather than by who they are or what they did in the past.</u> This is not to say that the state has a classless society. But to a surprising degree, our class structure is based on achievement rather than heredity. The "Oregon Way" is to treat everyone and everything with a healthy degree of skepticism until it is proven that the person or the idea can "get the job done." It is probably this norm, more than any other, which led to

public attraction of the idea of focusing schooling on "competencies."

Second, Oregonians tend not to have much regard for history which occurred outside of the state and they certainly don't pay much attention to ideas which are "imported." It is interesting that, at least so far, our state's planning for the bicentennial is taking place as if the United States started in 1858 - the year Oregon became a state. Referencing education, this norm is exhibited by an uncharacteristic willingness to innovate and to openly discuss the need for change. This attitude may also have some bearing on the speed with which competency-based policies were adopted. Those persons who suggested that perhaps we should move to such policies in only one small field or wait to learn from the experiences of other states or future research were generally steamrolled in the push to overhaul as many related policy areas as possible.

Finally, the so-called "True Oregonian" professes a fine sense for the proper role of "experts." An "expert" is someone who can suggest how to do something, not what to do. Consequently, Oregonians feel no sense of inferiority in deciding for themselves what should be the focus of their educational system and reserving to educators the primary role in determining how to implement these decisions once they are made. This attitude had significant bearing on the decision to focus state policies on the "outcomes" of schooling and delegating to local schools the operational decisions of how to achieve such outcomes.

Now, let us look at the policies themselves.

During 1972-74, three separate but interrelated statewide policies were enacted providing the legal basis for moving Oregon public and elementary schools and the postsecondary institutions preparing educational personnel for these schools to a competency-based orientation. These three policy areas dealt with:

- Changes in the minimum requirements for graduation from high school;
- Changes in the standards upon which personnel preparation institutions are accredited and educational personnel are certified;
- Changes in the minimum school standards used by the state to accredit elementary and secondary schools.

A brief review of each of these policy areas in the order in which they were adopted follows.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- Adopted in 1972 by the Oregon Board of Education with initial implementation required in the fall of 1974, with full implementation to be completed by spring of 1978.
- Legal reference - Administrative Rule 22-240 - Compliance assured by the State Department of Education through Minimum School Standards authorized by Oregon Revised Statute 326.051 (1)(a).

This rule may be viewed as having two parts, one dealing with minimum requirements which students must complete in order to be eligible for a high school diploma, and the second dealing with related instruction and management operations of school districts.

Student Requirements

- Completion of a minimum of 21 units of credit during grades 9-12 of which 11 must be earned in specified subject areas and 10 may be elective. Required areas are: communications, mathematics, social science, citizenship education, laboratory science, health education, physical education, personal finance, and career education;
- Completion of 12 years of "planned educational experience" unless this is modified through locally-adopted policy allowing for early or delayed graduation;
- Successful demonstration of competencies in three general areas - personal development, social responsibility and career development. An enumeration of minimum competencies required is provided in Appendix A.

District Requirements

- Identification of the performance indicators the district is willing to accept as evidence that individual students have attained the specified minimum competencies at a level which equips them "to survive in the society in which they live;"
- Development of elective offerings which are based on the needs of students and determination of whether additional local requirements will be added to the state minimums as a prerequisite for graduation;
- Development of mechanisms to assure that student progress towards competencies is carefully monitored and that appropriate instructional help is provided to those who need it;
- Development of record keeping systems to document student achievements of competencies which can be transferred to student transcripts that report the degree to which each student has achieved the specified competencies;
- Development of "course statements" for all courses offered at the secondary level relating to the graduation requirements (i.e., statements of goals, minimum competencies to be taught in the course, instructional options, evaluation methods and so forth);
- Development of methods for allowing students the option of credit by examination;
- Development of policies and programs allowing for multiple approaches to course design, provisions for early or delayed graduation, off-campus instruction, access to alternative learning experiences and opportunities for requesting waivers from state requirements based on individual student needs;
- Adoption of policies allowing for an issuing of "certificates of competency" to those students who do not qualify for a diploma to inform the student, parent and others as to the degree to which such students have achieved specified competencies.

EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION

On July 1, 1973, responsibility for the accreditation of educational personnel development programs and the certification of teachers, specialists and administrators was shifted from the Oregon State Board of Education to the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. The Commission is composed of teachers and administrators from elementary, secondary and post-secondary education and public representatives. This body is now administering three policy documents which are briefly described below.

Standards for the Approval of College and Teacher Education Programs

- Adopted by the Oregon Board of Education in June, 1973 with enactment authority transferred to TSPC in the following month. The effective date of the standard was January 1, 1974.
- Legal reference - Administrative Rule 22-005 through 22-520 promulgated under the authority of Oregon Revised Statute 342.120 to 342.200.

These standards update rules previously adopted in 1955 and govern the accreditation of all existing programs preparing educational personnel for employment in elementary and secondary education. Major changes in the standards included a provision requiring greater involvement of public school personnel in the design and focus of preparation programs, better program orientation to public school needs, more extensive and meaningful field experiences and greater flexibility in student programming. Of specific impact is a section requiring that the content for a teaching specialty be closely allied with curriculum requirements of the Oregon Board of Education, thus assuring that teacher preparation shall be related to minimum competencies required of elementary and secondary students.

Process Standards for Educational Personnel Development Programs

- Adopted by the Oregon Board of Education in June, 1973 with enactment authority transferred to TSPC in the following month. The effective date of the standard was July 1, 1974.
- Legal reference - Administrative Rule 23-005 through 23-425 promulgated under Oregon Revised Statutes 342.120 to 342.200.

These rules apply specifically to all new personnel development programs in the state or to all new elements of existing programs. In addition, postsecondary institutions may elect (and are encouraged) to eventually have all of their programs accredited under this standard. The process standards are intended to promote and guide the development of personnel development programs which are (1) centered in consortia of institutions, agencies and organizations which are directly involved in or affected by

the education and employment of teachers, and are (2) directly oriented to the development of professional competencies.

Oregon Rules for Certification of Teachers, Specialists and Administrators

- Adopted by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission on December 13, 1974 and effective July 1, 1975.
- Legal reference - Administrative Rules 31-000 to 34-042 authorized under Oregon Revised Statutes 342.120 to 342.200, 342.340 to 342.430 and 342.505 to 342.633.

These rules provide that applicants for personnel certificates in Oregon may be approved on one of three bases: a) they have graduated from an Oregon institution that is accredited by TSPC under the standards mentioned earlier and thus their preparation has been all or partially competency-based; b) they are a graduate of an institution accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (except for applicants for certificates as personnel service specialists or administrators); or c) they are a graduate of some other out-of-state institution and their preparation is reviewed and approved by TSPC using its internal rules and regulations. Of particular interest to those concerned with competency-based education, however, is the provision in this rule allowing the TSPC to substitute successful teaching or administrative experience to satisfy minimal requirements for formal college preparation. Individuals may thus gain a certificate by being able to successfully demonstrate "competency" in lieu of formal academic requirements.

MINIMUM SCHOOL STANDARDS

- Adopted by the Oregon Board of Education on December 13, 1974 with provisions becoming effective on a staggered schedule beginning in 1975-76 and ending in 1980-81.
- Legal reference - Administrative Rules 22-201 through 22-275 adopted under Oregon Revised Statute 326.051 (1)(a).

With the adoption of these 16 standards, the Board completed its shift to competency-based policies by completely revising minimum school standards which are used to accredit schools and thus make them eligible for state and federal financial aid.

In the past, such standards focused almost exclusively on "inputs" - like the number of books in the library, space per child and so forth. The new standards (which incorporate the graduation requirements mentioned earlier) focus both on "outputs" and "processes" by:

- Extending the notion of competency-based instructional programs to elementary and junior high education;
- Requiring all school districts to adopt a variety of instructional and management processes which are felt to be essential to the successful design and operation of competency-based programs.

In terms of instructional programming, the Standards require that effective September of 1975, all school districts which enroll students in grades kindergarten through eight must:

- Provide instruction in communication skills, mathematics, science, social science, health education, physical education, music education and the visual and performing arts;
- Provide students with the opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills in personal development, social responsibility and career development applicable to the minimum competencies required for graduation as adopted for the receiving high school.

Instructional and management requirements include:

- Adoption of a system of instructional planning which will provide for establishing goals (K-12), allow for community participation in selecting expected instructional outcomes and include assessment of student performance in program areas with this data leading to decisions on instructional priorities and program changes;
- Initiation of a system of diagnosis and prescription at the classroom level to assure that each child acquires basic communication and mathematics skills and also acquires a basis for achieving competencies;
- Initiation of personnel policies which insure qualified staff and appropriate staff development;
- Operation of student counseling and health programs;

- Adoption of policies and programs which assure that services such as transportation, building construction, media centers and so forth effectively support the operation of the competency-based instructional program;

- Initiation of policies that assure that class size is justified by the type of educational program offered;

- Initiation of policies assuring that there is non-discrimination in educational programming and employment.

This quick overview can hardly do justice to all aspects of the three policy areas described and I would encourage those of you who are interested to write for the various documents described in the bibliography in the fact sheet we've provided. Those of us in Oregon think we're headed for an exciting and challenging future. We invite you in AERA to help us in any way you can. But remember, you can come to visit, but don't stay.

APPENDIX A - MINIMUM COMPETENCIES REQUIRED

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Each student shall demonstrate competencies necessary to:

a) Read, listen, analyze, speak and write.

b) Compute, using the basic processes.

c) Understand basic scientific and technological processes.

d) Develop and maintain a healthy mind and body.

e) Develop and maintain the role of a lifelong learner.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Each student shall demonstrate the competencies required to function effectively and responsibly:

a) As a citizen in the community, state and nation.

b) As a citizen in interaction with his or her environment.

c) As a citizen on the streets and highways.

d) As a consumer of goods and services.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Each student shall demonstrate competencies required to function effectively within a career cluster or broad range of occupations.